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NSC FOR JMYERS
CPA FOR GEORGE WOLFE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/2008

TAGS: EFIN ETTC IZ JO

SUBJECT: JORDANIAN SUPPORT FOR THE IRAQI ASSET HUNT

REF: SECSTATE 247694

Classified By: David M. Hale, Charge d'Affaires, a.i.

¶1. (S/NF) Expressing appreciation for Jordan's cooperation in tracking Iraqi assets, the Charge explained to Prime Minister Ali Abul Ragheb August 28 that the investigation had reached a stage where more specific information was needed about individual accounts, companies and methods. He pressed the Prime Minister to authorize continued discrete cooperation between U.S. investigators and Jordanian officials in the areas identified in reftel.

¶2. (S/NF) Abul Ragheb said he would consult with his ministers on a response. In general, however, he thought it was best to "let the past be the past." It was futile, he said, to put too much energy into this effort since Iraqi businessmen and their Jordanian henchmen had been very clever in disguising their transactions. The pending request for detailed information on companies was particularly difficult, he said, because companies mentioned were Jordanian firms that did legitimate business in Jordan -- whatever else they might have been involved in -- and were protected by Jordanian bank secrecy. The Charge stressed our interest in recovering stolen assets, not investigating possible past sanctions violations.

¶3. (S/NF) Abul Ragheb added that the Iraqi General Council delegation that visited Amman earlier in the week (septel) had raised with him their interest in the quick return of Iraqi assets frozen by Jordan. Abul Ragheb said that this was one of a number of financial and trade issues, including the Central Bank of Jordan claims on Iraq and the status of pending deliveries under the bilateral trade protocol, that needed to be discussed between the two countries.

¶4. (S/NF) Comment: As the PM's unforthcoming response suggests, we are not confident in quick progress on this issue. We will also raise the request in intelligence channels. Planned U.S.-Jordanian meetings in Washington next month, including the King's visit, would be other opportunities to drive home our points. Although he is not personally involved in the issue, Planning Minister Awadallah's September 4 meeting with Treasury U/S Taylor would be a chance for Treasury to press a senior Jordanian who is close to the King.

HALE